

Executive Summary: “Click It or Ticket”

A Special Traffic Enforcement Program called “Click It or Ticket” (CIOT) was conducted in April-June in Alabama. Multiple agencies and organizations participated in this effort, under the leadership of the Law Enforcement/Traffic Safety (LETS) Division of the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs. Waves of public education and enforcement were conducted, working toward the single goal of improving safety belt use to increase highway safety.

Before and after safety belt use was evaluated in three primary ways: (1) by direct observation of vehicles, based upon a carefully designed sampling technique, (2) through questionnaires distributed at driver’s licenses offices and county Probate Judge’s offices in six counties, and (3) through a telephone survey.

The evaluations showed that the program was well run and it was effective. Alabamians have gotten the message; they know they should be wearing their safety belts. **Restraint use rose from 78.72% prior the program to 81.85% after it in only a matter of weeks. The rate of 81.85% is an all time high for the state of Alabama in terms of seat belt usage.** This was the second year in a row that Alabama reached an all time high in safety belt usage following the Click It or Ticket campaign.

Some of the important facts and findings from the program are summarized below:

- The 81.85% rate at the end of the 2005 CIOT project was an increase over the rate achieved at the end of the 2004 CIOT campaign. This rate was the second year in a row for a new all time high for belt use in the state of Alabama.
- Since the 2004 safety belt observation study, belt use had declined a little more than one percent. This decline is less than the decline seen between years in previous studies. In past years, the decline seen from year to year has been approximately four percent. Hopefully, this smaller decline indicates increased retention of the message conveyed in the Click It or Ticket campaign.
- Between 2000 and 2001, belt use grew 9%, but no additional growth was seen between 2001 and 2002. Between 2002 and 2003 belt use fell just over one percent. The leveling off seen between 2001 and 2002 and the drop seen between 2002 and 2003 were initially a cause for concern. In 2004, things began to turn around as belt use grew 2.59% between 2003 and 2004. This positive trend is apparently continuing as there was another increase in 2005.
- As for gender, women wore their safety belts 88.64% of the time. This was much higher than the 77.31% rate for men.
- Observations of use by race/ethnicity showed whites wore belts 83.23%, non-whites 77.58%, and Hispanics 90.33% of the time. The use among Hispanics was higher than expected based on past studies and should be further investigated before any significant conclusions about improvement in belt usage are drawn.

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- Responses to a questionnaire showed self-reported use of safety belts decreased in all three categories of vehicles. For individuals driving cars, the rate went from 73.8% to 72.1% during the program. For those driving pickups, the rate went from 66.9% to 62.1%. For those driving SUV's or vans, the rate went from 70.0% to 65.3%.
- The questionnaire showed that motorists were getting the safety belt message, positive responses grew from 77.9% before to 87.3% after the CIOT program. The high starting percentage of 77.9% is the same starting percentage achieved in 2004. This high rate also indicates retention of CIOT programs from past years.
- Questionnaire respondents identified television as the prime conduit for information.
- During a telephone survey, interviewees were asked if they used their safety belts all the time. Eighty-eight percent answered “yes” during the “pre” period and 89% during the “post” period.
- Ninety-five percent of the phone survey participants self-reported their safety belt use as either “all the time” or “most of the time.”
- Eighty-eight percent of phone respondents had seen or heard the safety belt message in the past month in the surveys conducted after the CIOT campaign. This (and other data) showed that Alabamians are getting the message.
- When looking at phone survey responses broken down by race there were some slight differences that should be noted. The self-reported belt use rates were 89% for whites, 83% for non-whites, and 88% for Hispanics.
- One question was very revealing – 19 out of every 20 respondents wanted to be wearing their safety belts if they were ever involved in a crash. The message is out; they know that wearing their seatbelts is safer than not wearing them.
 - A massive enforcement exercise was conducted over a two-week period.
 - The majority of all law enforcement agencies in the state of Alabama participated in the 2005 CIOT campaign in some manner.
 - 346 check points were conducted.
 - Thousands of patrol miles were driven and almost 47,000 officer hours were devoted to safety belt special enforcement efforts.
 - 10,716 safety belt citations were given.
 - 242 child restraint citations were given.
 - 46,756 total citations, arrests, and warnings were issued.
 - The total number of 2005 enforcement activities was lower than the activities in 2001-2004. However, there was still a slight increase over the number of citations issued in 2004.

Important information has already been extracted from the data to explain some of the reasons for the increased use. In addition, these data have provided clues as to why some motorists refuse to use belts. In the long term this information, and additional facts gleaned from the data by research, offer the best chance to design methodologies that can push belt use to its ultimate position—100%. Clearly, the 2005 Click It or Ticket was very successful, and it paved the way for future success.